

Exchange With Reporters at Cardozo High School

January 19, 1998

Paula Jones Lawsuit

Q. Mr. President, according to Ambassador Seitz, the British believe that Jean Kennedy Smith passed along intelligence information to the IRA. Does that concern you, sir?

On another subject—[laughter]—sir, I didn't hear, I'm sorry, I'm getting hard of hearing. Well, on another subject, after Saturday are you persuaded you may prevail if the Jones case actually does go to trial?

The President. You know, the judge asked us not to talk about it, and I think at least somebody involved in it ought to follow her instructions.

Q. You mean the judge's gag order, sir?

The President. Mr. Bennett will say anything that I have to say about that.

Attack on U.S. Citizens in Guatemala

Q. Did you see that Seitz story, sir, the Ambassador Seitz book?

You've seen the news from Guatemala. Is there anything the United States can do to safeguard U.S. citizens down there?

The President. Well, first of all, it's a terrible thing what happened with that. I have a lot of concerns, obviously, for the victims and their families. But we're persuaded that the Government is taking appropriate action. And it is—where they were, you know, there had been some difficulties. But I think that the Government is doing what it can, and we've been in touch with them. The main thing we need to do now is be concerned with the victims and their families and do whatever we can to minimize such things happening in the future.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Are you discouraged about the advance word that Prime Minister Netanyahu may not have anything to say that would advance the peace process?

The President. Well, I'm looking forward to the meeting. I'm committed to making it a success. I'm going to do my part, and I just want us to have constructive relations where we can move this forward. And I've

been working on it all morning; that's why I'm a little late here today. I'm going to be prepared to reach out a hand in cooperation to both the Prime Minister and to Mr. Arafat and we'll see what happens. But I've got high hopes. I've worked hard on it. The United States, I think, is viewed rightly as a country that just wants a just, stable, and lasting peace. And we're all going to have to make some moves if we're going to get there. But I'm looking forward to this meeting.

Participation in Community Service

Q. When was the last time you painted a wall, sir?

The President. Not very long ago. This is the third painting project I've done with the national service—with the AmeriCorps people. But we really wanted to emphasize Martin Luther King's birthday as a day of service, a day on, not a day off. And I want to thank the people from the DC school system and the city government and General Becton and the others. This is encouraging, to have all these young people out here. And all over America there are young people working today, tens of thousands of them. That's the image of our young people I'd like for the rest of America to see, and I hope that they will inspire more people of all ages to get involved in community service.

Q. Thank you.

The President. You guys need to give Sam his cuts; he didn't have to work hard today. [Laughter]

Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith

Q. Sir, could you look into that Smith thing?

The President. Yes, I will. I will.

Participation in Community Service

Q. Mr. President, how much painting experience do you have?

The President. When I was a younger man, I did quite a bit of it.

Q. For who?

The President. For myself. That's the advantage when you elect a real middle class President—you get people who've had to do things like this in life.

Q. What's the shirt mean, Mr. President?

The President. It's just a shirt my daughter gave me.

Q. And the numbers on the back?

The President. I'm not sure. I have no idea. I hope it's not something embarrassing; I don't have a clue. *[Laughter]*

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. in room 306 at the school. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. District Judge Susan Webber Wright; Robert S. Bennett, the President's attorney in the Paula Jones case; Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; Gen. Julius Becton, USA (Ret.), superintendent, District of Columbia public schools; and Sam Donaldson, ABC News White House correspondent. A reporter referred to Raymond G.H. Seitz, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks to Volunteers at Cardozo High School

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The President. Thank you. Are you having a good day?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Me, too. I want to thank Mr. Ballard, the principal, and I want to say a special word of appreciation to the officials who are here with me today: first, the head of the Corporation for National Service, Harris Wofford; DC City Council Chairperson Charlene Drew Jarvis; General Becton; School Board President Harvey; Terri Green, the PTA president; the other school board members; and representatives of council members. And especially I want to thank all the volunteers in the AmeriCorps NCC program. And thanks for this; I like my little jacket here.

Thirty-one years ago Martin Luther King came to this very neighborhood and urged the people here to engage in citizen service to rebuild their lives and their community and their future. That's what you're doing here today. You are honoring the legacy of Martin Luther King and answering the highest calling of citizenship in this country.

My staff did a little research to illustrate what we could all do if we just gave back a little to our community. And they swear that if just everybody with the last name of

Clinton and Gore in America—just the people whose last name is Clinton and Gore in America—would put in two hours a week, they could paint every classroom and every public high school in America by Martin Luther King's next birthday.

Now, that gives you an idea of what we can do if we serve and work together. That's why I have invested so much in AmeriCorps, our national service program that I'm so proud of. And all of you who are involved in the program, let me thank you from the bottom of my heart. I hope that you're getting a lot out of it. I know the AmeriCorps volunteers I painted with today made me feel proud that we started this.

That's why I have strongly supported, along with all the former Presidents, General Colin Powell and the Presidents' Summit on Service and the work that he is doing and that tens of thousands of people across America are doing to give all of our children a good chance in life.

But finally let me say that this country will never be all that it can be and your future will never be all that it can be unless we decide we're going to build that future together. We will never be able to bridge the racial and other divides in this country unless we decide we're not only going to work together and learn together but we're going to serve together.

We actually have to believe that we're all better off when our neighbors are better off. We actually have to believe that we'll do better if we go forward together. We actually have to believe that this diversity we have is a blessing; and that the fact that some of us start out life poorer than others is a condition that can be overcome if we work hard to give people who deserve it a hand up; and that as we do that, we are all happier, more fulfilled, and living in a stronger America. That's what this is about.

This is not just about painting the walls of a school, although I passionately believe it's important. I, personally, as a student, preferred old buildings to new ones, but every student deserves to go into a clean building with bright walls and clear windows, sending a signal that the student and his or her future is important.